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ABSTRACT

The process of implementation of higher education reforms at nine universities and colleges in France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Poland, Sweden, Norway, and the United Kingdom is identified and compared; and a framework for implementation analysis is presented. After a brief review of the background for the study, the conceptual framework is explored. The steps in the process are defined and a sequential model is proposed as follows: (1) pressures for reform, (2) policy formulation process, (3) adopted reform with specific goals, (4) implementation process, and (5) outcomes. It is explained that the research is based on a set of nine case studies in the seven countries, and represent reforms adopted between the early or middle 1960's or early 1970's whose implementation process is sufficiently advanced to allow for meaningful analysis. All the reforms have the common denominator of broadening access to higher education, while at the same time representing disparate higher education systems (e.g., political and administrative centralization and decentralization, unitary and binary systems). Work done on the first two phases of the project is discussed and future work is outlined. The outline of the case studies is discussed and it is stated that the core of the study is the description of the implementation process. (PHR)

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INFORMATION ON RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

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CURRENT PROJECT

PROJECT TITLE THE PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION REFORMS[1)]

IN PROGRESS AT

Institute of Education of the European Cultural Foundation
c/o Université de Paris IX-Dauphine
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PROJECT LEADER Ladislav Cerych, Director

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1) A comparative research based on nine case-studies of specific reforms undertaken in seven European countries; two of these case-studies relate to Sweden: the creation and development of the University of Umeå, and the implementation of the 25/4 Scheme.

The authors of the Swedish case-studies are

Lillemor Kim, UHÄ (The 25/4 Scheme)
Jan Erik Lane (University of Umeå)

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BACKGROUND

1 To many observers, the 1960's were a period of very considerable educational change in the majority of Western European countries, and in North America. A quantitative expansion - often a doubling - of student numbers, became associated with institutional changes and a transformation in values. Radical departures from established patterns included:

- the creation of new universities, for example in the United Kingdom and in Germany,

- overall national reforms, for example the Loi Edgar Faure in France or the Swedish reforms,

- major changes in the structures of higher education, for example the development of the comprehensive university (Gesamthochschule) in Germany,

- broadening of opportunities for access to higher education (e g the 25/4 Scheme in Sweden) and creation of alternatives to traditional higher education, e g the development of the Polytechnics in the United Kingdom or the District Colleges in Norway,

- an increasing interest in distance learning, but with different methods of implementing such schemes in each country.

2 Which of these reforms and emphases were little more than passing phases and which were deeper and more fundamental, is even now far from clear. The three pillars of the French reform - institutional autonomy, student participation, and interdisciplinarity - still remain very distant objectives; most of the new universities, especially in Germany but to some extent also in the United Kingdom have moved closer and closer towards traditional models; concepts such as recurrent education or equality of opportunity are very far from being fully implemented. Thus, it now seems necessary to pose the following fundamental questions: why is it that so many higher education reforms have not succeeded, have never or only partially been implemented, have been distorted, or have only been amenable to introduction at particular times or in certain sets of circumstances?

AIMS OF THE PROJECT

The aims of the Project are as follows:

1 to determine the different aspects of the implementation processes which have affected the degree of success or failure of proposed reforms,

2 to compare the experience of different countries,

3 to provide a framework for a general "implementation analysis" concerning higher education reform and policies and thereby define a series of relationships and parameters which might give educational planners and policy makers a better insight into the process of reform and the conditions that must be fulfilled to enhance chances of its effectiveness.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The third of the above aims implies that the elaboration of an appropriate conceptual framework for the study of implementation of higher education reforms (policies) is an integral part of the Project itself and can therefore be presented in advance to a very limited extent only.

A first approach to a provisional and summary conceptual framework was presented at the "Conference on Research into Higher Education" organised by the National Board of Universities and Colleges, Sweden at Dalarö from 12 to 16 June, 1978 and subsequently (in a revised version) at the 4th International Conference on Higher Education 29 August to 1 September, 1978 at Lancaster. In general it can be said that this approach - the main points of which are summarised below - draws heavily on the recent especially American work of authors in the field of policy sciences and organizational theory, some of whom made "implementation analysis" a specific focus of their inquiries:

1 The implementation process of higher education reforms represents merely one specific case of implementation processes of social policies in general. However, the process of implementation of higher education reforms also represents a very special if not extreme case of policy implementation: these reforms relate to organizations and systems which are highly diffused in respect of their goals, decision making structures and participants. This "diffuseness" makes their implementation more complex than is the case in almost any other social policy sector. Consequently also, the chain of conditions which have to be fulfilled in order for a higher education reform to become fully effective is particularly long (i e the number of decision points and clearances which have to be passed is very high), and this contributes greatly to the unpredictability of outcomes.

2 This unpredictability is further reinforced by the multiplicity of actors involved in the implementation of any higher education reform and by the multiplicity of often incompatible goals and interests which they pursue. As a result, the implementation process can be viewed as a series of conflicts and bargained decisions reflecting the preferences and resources of different participants (actors) in this process. These conflicts and bargaining processes cannot but further prolong the already lengthy implementation process and also disrupt or even destroy the internal coherence of the reform proposals.

3 The process of implementation must be considered as part of a much more comprehensive overall process of change. This can be divided into four stages:

a) dissatisfaction with the existing system (or some of its aspects) and/or perception of new needs and goals which the existing system does not, or can only inadequately, fulfill,

b) discussion and formulation of alternative proposals for reform,

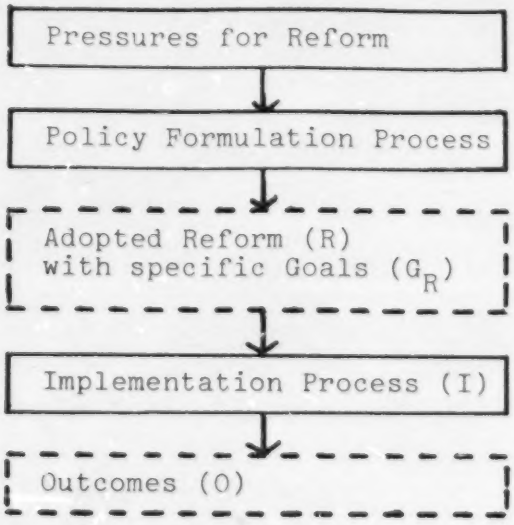
c) choice and adoption of a particular proposal,

d) implementation of the adopted proposal.

Stage (a) corresponds to what might be called "pressures for reform", stages (b) and (c) represent the policy formulation process, and stage (d) the process of implementation.

The adoption of a particular reform proposal, i e the end of stage (c) above also implies agreement on certain manifest goals against which the implementation process can be judged or evaluated. Consequently, the central issue in any implementation analysis will be an assessment of the difference between stated goals and targets of a reform (policy) and the actual outcomes, as well as of the interpretation of the reasons for this difference.

We can thus propose the following sequential model:



Shortcomings in the results (i e the difference between outcomes (O) and original reform goals /G_R/) are of course not always due to the implementation process alone. They might be - and often are - heavily "mortgaged" by the nature of the input which goes into the reform, and by the whole process which preceded its adoption.

The implementation process can be "mortgaged" by its preceding phases in a number of ways:

- first, the actors who lost out at the policy formulation stage will often carry over their fight into the phase of implementation,

- second, the implementation process will be heavily influenced by the nature of the original pressures for reform and by the degree to which the adopted reform provided a response to them,

- third, through the nature of the goals and values affected by the reform in question, whether widely shared or not, precisely or loosely defined, and the like,

- fourth, by the degree of compatibility between the new measures, institutions or structures introduced by the reform and the prevailing logic, ethos, "rules of the game" or, in brief, history of the system.

4 Overall it can probably be said that the present Project adopts as a starting point a model which Majone and Wildavsky called "implementation as evolution"[1] (contrary to the "implementation as control" and "implementation as interaction" models). This model postulates that implementation always involves reformulation as well as carrying out of the original policy. It does not go as far as to pretend that implementation is merely "the continuation of politics by other means" (which is the essential characteristic of the interaction model), but it does assume that outcomes of the implementation process are never quite predictable because constraints and forces which will influence this process can never be fully foreseen. Yet, the original policy (reform) goals are significant and the implementation process can be evaluated, provided these goals are considered only as broad guidelines or a cluster of dispositions within which the implementation process will unfold itself. It might be of course that the original goals cannot be achieved even qua broad guidelines, in which case the implementation analysis will, it is assumed, show the main reasons of such impossibility and indicate directions in which more attainable objectives could be sought.

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1) G Majone and A Wildavsky: "Implementation as evolution", in Policy Studies, 1978, vol 2, Sage.

METHOD

1 Research for this Project is based on a set of nine case-studies, i e on an inductive approach, and subsequently on a comparative analysis of the findings arising from these studies.

The following cases are being investigated by individual researchers or research teams selected in each of the countries concerned.

France	The creation and development of I U T's ("Instituts Universitaires de Technologie") as a new short-cycle form of higher education
Federal Repuclic of Germany	Proposals for and development of the "Gesamthochschule" (comprehensive university)
Italy	Creation and development of the University of Cosenza, Calabria
Poland	A reform of the early sixties introducing in admission to higher education positive discrimination in favour of students from working class families
Sweden	a) The 25/4 Scheme
	b) Creation and development of the University of Umeå
Norway	a) Creation and development of the University of Tromsø
	b) Creation and development of Regional Colleges
United Kingdom	The creation and building up of the Open University.

American experience and its numerous existing evaluations will be used extensively, especially in the development of the theoretical parts of the Project and in the overall comparative analysis.

2 It will be noticed that all these case-studies represent reforms adopted between the early or middle sixties and early seventies whose implementation process is sufficiently advanced to allow a meaningful analysis, and also sufficiently documented for the necessary investigations to be undertaken with the relatively limited resources available. The latter fact, however, does not imply any duplication of research. None of the selected reforms has yet been submitted to an implementation

analysis as envisaged here and particularly not in a comparative perspective. Whether this should be called "comparative education", "comparative sociology" or a "comparative approach to formal organizations" is at this stage immaterial. Our main assumption is that the comparative method applied to the problem of higher education reform implementation represents an analytical tool which, since it alone is capable of assessing the role of different implementation parameters under different social (administrative, political...) environments, can identify forces and relationships in the implementation process which could not otherwise be discerned. In this sense, the comparative approach probably comes closest to what might be termed a "laboratory experiment" in higher education reform implementation.

3 The selected reforms have a variety of formal goals with, however, one common denominator: the broadening of access to higher education. In some cases, this broadening is motivated mainly by manpower considerations (I U T's), in others by objectives of social equality (25/4 in Sweden, Italy, Poland, United Kingdom), in others again by regional preoccupations (Sweden, Norway). The countries concerned represent different types of higher education systems reflecting for example:

- political and administrative centralisation and decentralisation,

- unitary and binary systems,

- systems with and without a higher degree of institutional autonomy,

- varying degrees of diversification and modes of enrolment,

- different power structures within and outside the university,

- different national economic rates of growth.

This variety should be of great help in assessing the role played in the implementation process by some of the key characteristics of different higher education systems.

4 It should also be noted that the selected cases represent both relatively successful and unsuccessful reforms. From an analytical as well as a practical point of niew, this is of course particularly important.

WORK SO FAR ACCOMPLISHED AND FURTHER STAGES FORESEEN

Preparatory and theoretical work on this Project started in Spring 1978. By April 1979, the following two important phases of the Project were completed:

1 Elaboration of the provisional conceptual framework as summarised above. In this respect, the Project Leader benefited greatly from the submission of his paper to the earlier mentioned conferences at Dalarö and Lancaster, and from his extended visit to the USA where he could discuss problems of social policy implementation especially at the University of Berkeley and at Yale University.

2 Selection and appointment of authors or centres in charge of the different national case-studies; discussions between the Project Leader and these authors or centres and launching of all the case-studies according to the common outline.

Future work falls in another three phases:

a) Preparation of first versions of the case-studies between March 1979 and September 1979. At the end of this period the Project Leader will visit all countries concerned and conduct a series of interviews with a selected number of persons involved in the reforms under study.

b) Preparation of final versions of case-studies and of a first version of the comparative report (between October 1979 and March 1980). An international meeting to discuss these papers is planned at the end of this period.

c) Preparation of final version of comparative report and arrangements for publication (between March and June 1980).

At this stage, it is planned to publish in English in one volume the general comparative synthesis with summaries of all the case-studies and in one or several other volumes (also in English) the complete set of the case-studies. Most of these will probably also be published independently in the languages of the countries concerned.

FINANCING OF THE PROJECT

About two thirds of the total cost of the Project are covered from resources of the Institute of Education. One third, representing the direct costs of the national case-studies, is provided from sources in the countries concerned. Thus the Swedish case-studies are supported by the National Board of Universities and Colleges.

Ladislav Cerych

1979-03-28

OUTLINE OF CASE-STUDIES

The nine case-studies mentioned above follow broadly the outline below:

INTRODUCTION

1 Summary description of reform (when adopted and/or promulgated, main dates, principal objectives, content, location, actors, legal status)

- This introductory section should merely present to the reader the object of the case-study; its total length should not be more than two pages, possibly shorter.

PART I

2 History of reform - the policy formulation stage

a) The environment (overall atmosphere and conditions - economic, social, political - surrounding the conception and preparation of the reform),

b) successive stages in the preparation of the reform (factual account),

c) main motivations leading to the original initiatives,

d) persons and/or social groups who initiated the process,

e) different objectives - declared and undeclared - associated with and underlying the preparation of the reform; variations of these objectives in the course of the preparation of the reform,

f) conflicts, if any, and opposing views in the course of the policy formulation process (the bargaining which preceded the final design of the reform - e g the choice of location of a new institution, the quantitative objectives etc), main support and resistances, role of mass-media.

- This section is of particular importance to the later analysis of the implementation process which is often heavily influenced by events preceding the actual adoption of the reform: actors and pressure groups involved, resistances encountered, the overall climate surrounding (and often conditioning) the first initiatives and the policy design etc. The section might represent 20 to 25 % of the total length of the text.

2

3 Formal and informal goals of the reforms when adopted and promulgated

a) Quantitative and qualitative objectives as stated in the official texts (law, charter, decree) of the reform, and in other relevant public statements and materials (ministerial declarations); different interpretations of these objectives.

b) Informal and/or unstated objectives (to the extent that they can be substantiated).

c) Nature of the adopted formal and informal objectives: precise and specific versus vague and general; their relation to prevailing goals and values of the overall higher education system (to what extent did they imply radical departures from or simply incremental change of the existing system).

d) Individuals and groups primarily affected (beneficiaries and potential "loosers") by the proposed objectives, and required changes in behaviour of different groups affected by the reform.

e) Rewards and incentives foreseen (if any) to induce changes in behaviour necessary in order to attain proposed objectives.

- The primary aim of (a) and (b) of this section is to establish a set of criteria which should allow a first assessment of the implementation process, i e of the gap or difference between the original intentions of the policy makers, and the actual outcomes. Subsections (c), (d), and (e) should offer an analysis of the reform objectives which will be relevant for the interpretation of the implementation process in part III of the study. This section should be relatively short - not more than 10 % of the total text.

PART II

4 The present state of the reform

a) Relevant quantitative indicators (according to the nature of the reform: enrolments in a new institution, the social composition of the student population, employment perspectives of graduates etc. The indicators should in particular reflect the extent to which the specific original objectives of the reform were attained.

b) Qualitative indicators - Here the degree of attainment (or non-attainment) of the original objectives not susceptible to measurement should be examined: e g regional or employment relevance of curriculum, place and role of the new institution (new admission pattern) within the overall higher education system of the country concerned etc.

c) Objectives fulfilled and roles assumed (if any) by the reforms but not foreseen at the point of its adoption.

d) Different opinions concerning the outcomes of the reform (public opinion at large, opinions of participating groups: teachers, students, administrators - and of outside groups concerned: political parties, trade unions, employers, local and regional authorities).

5 Brief assessment of the difference between original goals and actual outcomes (as arising from sections 3 a, 3 b and 4 a, 4 b, 4 c, 4 d).

- Part II should not be considered as a comprehensive evaluation of the reform under study; it should not attempt to speak of its success or failure, but merely try to establish the difference (or concordance) between original (formal) objectives and actual outcomes (based on factual data and information) and present a summary of the prevailing range of opinions on these outcomes. This Part should not constitute more than 15 % of the total study.

PART III - THE PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTATION

6 Brief factual account of the implementation process (main events and developments since the formal adoption of the reform).

7 Development of general socio-economic conditions, especially in comparison with those prevailing at the moment of the launching and adoption of the reform; shifts in political and socio-economic priorities (see 2 a above).

8 Attitudes and behaviours of participating groups towards reform: students, teachers, administrators (both within the educational institutions concerned and within central authorities) - and of relevant outside groups: business, industry, trade-unions, political parties, local and regional authorities. Rationale of these attitudes.

9 The personality, role and commitment of successive leaders and staff responsible for implementation.

10 Degree of availability of financial resources.

11 Development or decline of support for reform from mass-media.

12 Some considerations on the degree of integration (or non-integration) of the reform within the overall system of higher education.

13 The role of bureaucratic procedures (complexity and/or multiplicity of decision/veto points to be passed in order to implement the reform; inducements and sanctions available to reform supporters to overcome potential vetos and delays).

- Part III represents the core of the study (approx. 50 % of its total length). Its above outline is very tentative and will have to be adapted to each of the case studies particularly with regard to the sequence of different subsections and to the relative weight given to each one of them. The most important section is probably No. 8 on attitudes of participating and outside groups towards the reform under study; it might therefore have to be subdivided.

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